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THOUSANDS PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT HAWAII SHAKEOUT EARTHQUAKE DRILL

HONOLULU — More than 240,000 people across the state took a moment to “Drop, Cover and Hold On.” The Great Hawaii ShakeOut earthquake drill occurred at 10:15 a.m. as part of a larger international campaign for earthquake education and preparedness. Spearheaded locally by the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) and its partners, thousands who registered for the drill practiced those three simple lifesaving steps.

Today marks the ninth anniversary of the Kiholo Bay earthquake. In 2006, a magnitude-6.7 earthquake occurred offshore from Kiholo Bay on the west-facing side of Hawaii Island. Followed by several aftershocks in addition to a shallower and slightly weaker magnitude-6.0 quake to the north, the Kiholo Bay earthquake resulted in severe damage to Hawaii Island’s infrastructure and its effects reached up the island chain.

“Major earthquakes are unique from other natural hazards, not only in the effects they can have on our homes and buildings, but in the amount of time we have to prepare for them,” said Vern Miyagi, Administrator of Emergency Management. “Earthquakes are no-notice events and there are no scientific tools available to accurately predict the time, location or magnitude of future large earthquakes. This is why it is crucial for the people of Hawaii to understand how to best prepare for and respond to earthquakes.”

As one of HI-EMA’s largest partners this year, the State Department of Education (DOE) asked all public schools that were in session to participate in Thursday’s morning drill. (Kauai Complex Area was not in session and is planning to conduct the drill at a later date.)

“It is important that our students and school staff understand the proper ‘Drop, Cover and Hold On’ technique and be ready to react in a safe and timely manner, especially in a school setting,” said Schools Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi. “By practicing, students can build confidence in their ability to react, which will stay with them as they get older.”

Local, state and federal emergency management partners in Hawaii participated by following the earthquake drill with an internal communications exercise, testing tools such as the Hawaii Warning System (HAWAS), which allows them to transmit and receive emergency messages statewide.

(more)

According to another key partner in this year's drill, the U.S. Geological Survey Hawaiian Volcano Observatory (HVO), Hawaii has a history of powerful and destructive earthquakes. Hawaii experiences large earthquakes with a magnitude-6.0 or higher on a regular basis, roughly every five to ten years. Some are strong enough to cause physical damage and impact residents on all islands.

Earthquakes can cause landslides and tsunamis. A locally generated tsunami is one of Hawaii's greatest natural threats. Powerful tsunami waves can travel at the speed of a jet plane, allowing residents only minutes to evacuate to safety. After shaking from an earthquake has stopped, people should move immediately to higher ground and away from the ocean.

Additional partners who supported the coordination of this year's drill included local emergency management and civil defense agencies, Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC), State Public Charter Schools Commission, University of Hawaii at Hilo and American Red Cross.

ShakeOut began in Southern California in 2008, and Hawaii County has participated in the drill for the past two years. It has grown into an internationally recognized campaign with millions of participants taking part each year. To learn more about the Great Hawaii ShakeOut and earthquake preparedness, visit www.shakeout.org/hawaii.

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